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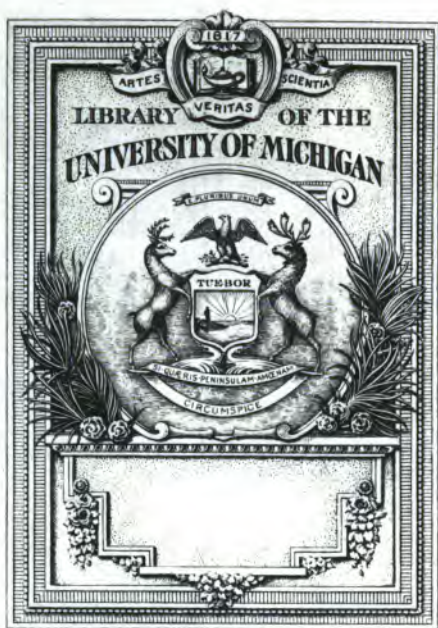
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No 15
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DISQUISITION

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CREATION, ANNIHILATION,

THE

FUTURE EXISTENCE,

AND

FINAL HAPPINESS

OF

ALL SENTIENT BEINGS.

“The genuine dictate of our natural faculties is the voice of God, no less than what he reveals from heaven ; and to say that it is fallacious is to impute a lie to the God of truth.”

REID.

BELFAST,

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1828,

PREFACE.

THE following disquisition was commenced with the sole view of proving the immortality of the soul ; but was imperceptibly extended, without regard to any particular arrangement, to other subjects, more or less connected with the principal design of the writer. If the premises laid down be true, and the consequences, though *novel*, be legitimately drawn, no injury can result to society from their promulgation ; should they be false, or should illogical conclusions have been drawn from true premises, it is the sincere wish of the writer that the fallacy may be clearly and distinctly pointed out by some more able and discriminating mind than he possesses, especially as the detection of error, and the subversion of every false system, either in morals, metaphysics, philosophy, or theology, shorten the road to truth, which is powerful and will finally prevail.

THE AUTHOR.

Maine, March 20, 1828.

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A DISQUISITION.

SOMETHING now exists. Nothing can create itself ; for nothing can act before it begins to exist ; therefore whatever exists must have existed from eternity, or have been created. Many beings exist, who have not existed from eternity in their present organized form and conscious state ; therefore some being, capable of creating them from nothing, or of forming them from uncreated substance, must have existed from eternity. That being is God. The unity of design, conspicuous in his works, clearly proves the unity and individuality of his being. The wise adaptation of means to ends, especially to the production of the greatest possible good, and the stupendous monuments of power, displayed in the visible creation, are evidence of his wisdom, power, and goodness, which, in degree, infinitely exceed our powers of comprehension. Wisdom and goodness necessarily imply justice and mercy ; for a wise being will be just, and a good one merciful. His justice is limited only by his goodness, and his mercy, by his wisdom. He is also a spiritual being ; for matter is inactive, insensible, unintelligent, and devoid of the essential attributes of Deity ; therefore matter cannot be God. But it does not thence follow that matter is not eternal, as some have erroneously imagined ; otherwise duration and space would be God ; for they are eternal and cannot be annihilated. The eternal existence of matter, like the eternal existence of duration and space, may be a necessary concomitant, if I may be allowed the expression, of the

eternal existence of God. The ancient philosophers believed it impossible that something should be created from nothing. Hence they concluded the world was eternal, not distinguishing between its existence in an organized state, and the existence of the materials of which it was formed. Moses had more correct ideas of creation; for the Hebrew word used by him to express that act, properly signifies to form anew by concretion. "Adam was formed of the dust of the ground," and the earth of chaotic materials, which may have existed, in an unorganized state from eternity. I have made these preliminary observations to show that there is no necessary connection between the hypothesis of the eternal existence of matter and atheism, which, of all systems, is the most absurd, irrational, and incredible. As it does not detract from the perfections of God to suppose him incapable of effecting physical impossibilities, any more than it does to believe him incapable of acting inconsistently with wisdom and goodness, I shall attempt, in a concise manner, to prove the eternal existence of matter from the physical impossibility of creating something from nothing. By the creation of something from nothing is meant the creation or production of something, ~~where~~ and where nothing, except God, duration, and space existed. If matter were created from nothing, the *act* of creation must have been *instantaneous*; for there is no *medium* between something and nothing—no *intermediate state* between *existence* and *non-existence*. Hence it follows that every particle of matter, if created from nothing, did both *exist* and *not exist* at one and the same time; for not the *least possible* point of time *could have elapsed* between its existence and non-existence. If, therefore, matter were created from nothing, it must have *existed* and *not have existed* at the *precise time* of its creation, which is *absurd*; therefore matter was not created, and consequently must be eternal. This method of reasoning appears to be *as conclusive* as the following, by which the motion of light is *demonstrat-*

ed to be *progressive* and not *instantaneous*. If the passage of a ray of light from the sun to the earth be *instantaneous*, the same ray will be at the sun and earth, at one and the same time, which is impossible; but not more so, to my apprehension, than that matter should exist and not exist, at one and the same time, as it must have done, if *instantaneously* created. The method of reasoning in both cases is *precisely* the same, and if the result in one case be *conclusive*, that in the other, must be *equally* so. The substance, therefore, from which every thing is formed, must have existed from eternity; and the work of creation, or rather formation, must have been *progressive*, and not *instantaneous*. It also follows, *admitting* the work of creation to have *commenced* from eternity, as there are good reasons to believe it did, that no created being is *eternal*; for the existence of the first *completely* created being must be *less than eternal* by the *whole time occupied* in its creation. It likewise follows that all changes, which take place in the course of nature, must *necessarilly* be *progressive*; otherwise that thing, from which any thing is changed, and the thing to which it is changed, would both exist in *distinct* forms or modes at one and the same time. For instance, if a globe be *instantaneously* changed into a cube, it would exist at the same time, both in the *form* of a globe and in that of a cube, which is absurd. It has been said that the *beginning* and *end* of every action, or change, must necessarily be *instantaneous*, and if these be *instantaneous* the whole act, or change, may be. To which it is replied, that if the beginning and end of an action be parts of it, no good reason can be assigned why these parts may not be *progressive* as well as any other equal parts of the same action; and if they be not parts of the action, the objection is wholly futile. The beginning and end of an action are its *termini*, between which the *whole action* is included; and if the *whole action* be *progressive*, every part of it must be so likewise. If a piece of wood be severed by any cause, say, the *progressive* descent of

an axe through the *whole space* occupied by the wood, the *whole effect*, that is, the severance of *every part* of the wood, must be *equally progressive*. Furthermore, if any change, or act, that of *creation*, for example, be instantaneous, it would occupy *no time*, and that which *does not occupy time, cannot occupy space*, and that which occupies *neither time nor space*, can have *no other* existence than that which is *merely ideal*.—Therefore the instantaneous change, or creation of any thing, has no foundation in the reason and nature of things. We have no knowledge of matter, except from its properties or qualities, perceived through the medium of our senses; but we cannot reasonably doubt its existence. We are equally ignorant of the nature of mind or spirit; but we have *stronger and more direct proofs* of its existence than we have of the existence of matter. We are *conscious* of the *operations* of *mind*; therefore *mind* must *exist*, otherwise it could not *act*; and if consciousness be not admitted as full proof of a fact, we can have no proof of any thing whatever. Spirit or mind, therefore, whatever it be, does really exist, and is as *far* removed from *nothing*, as matter is, or can be. Therefore it is *equally impossible* that the substance, or spiritual essence, which constitutes the minds of all sentient beings, should have been *created* from nothing, as that *gross matter* should have been; consequently it must have existed from eternity. The principle of life and the powers and faculties of mind, which cannot exist *abstractedly*, are something *more* than mere *nonentities*, or *creatures of imagination*, and can *no more* be produced from *nothing* than *mental substance itself* can; therefore they must be its *essential properties* or *qualities*, which *inhere* in it, and belong to it as necessarily as figure and extension belong to matter. We cannot, even in idea, separate *life* from *mind*, any more than we can *figure* from *body*. A *dead mind* is a *contradiction* in terms. Whether mental substance be *perfectly immaterial* or *not*, is unimportant to my present purpose. All I contend for, is, that it must be

something *essentially distinct* from *common matter*, whose *known properties* are so *essentially different* from the *properties* of *mind*, as to be *incompatible* with it. The *same* substance cannot be *essentially* active and *essentially* inactive, or possess *contradictory* properties, which would *neutralize* and *destroy* each other. We ought, however, carefully to distinguish between the *existence* of mental powers and the *exercise* of them; for, being *essential properties* of mental substance, they must have *ever existed*; but it does not necessarily follow that they must have *always acted*. By the *act of formation*, the mental substance, which contains or constitutes the intellectual part of any particular being, was so *modified* that its *latent* powers, like latent heat, became *sensible* and *active*; and were *facilitated*, *restricted*, or *qualified*, in regard to their *future operation*, as infinite wisdom saw fit, by *uniting* to the mind a *material body*, more or less perfect, according to its destined rank in the order of beings. The substance, which constitutes the intellectual part of every mixed being, may be, and probably is, *simple* and *unique*; and the *diversity* of intellect, observable in *different* beings, may be occasioned, as suggested by the ingenious C. Bonnet, by the *difference in number and structure* of the material organs of the body. Experience teaches that the faculties of the human mind are importantly *varied* by the *different state* of the body in *sickness* and in *health*. How much *greater* then would be the *variation*, could the *same faculties* be "transferred from the *most perfectly organized brain* of a man to *that* of an oyster?" What are commonly called the different powers and faculties of mind, I conceive to be nothing more than its *different modes or methods* of perceiving and acting; and in proportion as *these* are *varied*, and the mind acquires a *facility* and *accuracy* in its operations, in the *same proportion*, to use a common phrase, are its faculties multiplied, enlarged, and improved. All the perceptions of the mind, it is highly probable, are the *effect* of the *same* faculty, *differently excited*; and its *various operations* may be

either the *effect* of the *active power* of the *will alone, differently applied*, or the *combined effect* of the perceptive faculty and power of the will *acting in concert*. The union of the mind with a material body was probably necessary, in the first stage of conscious existence, to discipline and improve it, and give it some ideas it may not otherwise acquire. A more delicate instrument, anterior to mental experience, would be more likely to be injured and abused. Like the integuments of the germ of a plant, it may protect the tender *germ* of the *spiritual body*, which, according to the philosophy of St. Paul, if I rightly understand him, must be contained *within the material body*, and, after death, will germinate and be fully developed. However subtile and attenuated may be the substance of which this germ is composed—though it be void of gravity—incapable of being acted upon by any chymical agent, and in its own nature indestructible; yet it may *occupy space*, and consequently may have *one property* in common with material substance.(a) In consequence of this property, or affinity, the spiritual germ and material body may be enabled, during the continuance of their union, to act upon, and reciprocally influence, each other. This spiritual germ I conceive to be the *same* mental substance, which contains the soul, and in which life and all the powers and faculties of mind inhere, and which, after death has courteously divested it of its material covering, like the butterfly, when liberated from the *exuviae* of the caterpillar, will enter upon a more perfect state of existence, and, no longer chained to gross matter, may then be able, by the mere impulse of will, to traverse and explore the boundless regions of space. Admitting substance to be eternal, we are under the same obligations to divine goodness for conscious existence and all its enjoyments, we otherwise should have been. For the act of creation must have been virtually the same it would have been according to the commonly received opinion, except it was not instantaneous, and Deity had not the labour of creating the sub-

stance or materials of which the universe is formed. This surely can be no *reasonable* objection to the hypothesis I have endeavoured to establish. It must be obvious that the *same arguments* which have been advanced to prove the *impossibility* of creation, in the common acceptation of the term, *equally prove* the impossibility of *annihilation*, either of matter or mind, which may be *modified* and *progressively* changed, but *cannot be* annihilated; for the act of *reducing* something to nothing, like that of *creating* something from nothing, must, of necessity, be *instantaneous*.—Consequently the substance annihilated, whether mental or material, must *exist* and *not exist* at *one* and the *same time*, which is absurd. Therefore no substance or essence whatever can be annihilated. Hence it follows that the souls of all beings are in their own nature indestructible, and incapable of annihilation, and therefore immortal. With equal certainty it also follows from the wisdom, goodness, and perfections of God, that any *progressive change* he may see fit to *produce* in the minds or souls of any of his creatures, will *ultimately* be for the better and not for the worse; for it is no less impossible that he should act *inconsistently* with wisdom and goodness, than it is that he should effect physical impossibilities. The pride of man, contrary to the dictates of sound reason, has induced him to believe that, on earth, he was the exclusive favorite of heaven, and the sole heir of immortality. An enlarged, more liberal and correct view of the subject, will show the *absurdity* of this creed, and its *total incompatibility* with the attributes and perfections of God. That man ranks highest in the scale of beings, who inhabit this globe, is readily conceded; but we cannot thence infer that *he alone* possesses mental powers, and is *exclusively* immortal. So gradual is the descending scale from man to the meanest insect, and even to the lowest vegetable, and such is the disparity of intellect among individuals of the same species, that we have reason to believe many in-

dividuals of the human race possess more *limited* powers of mind, than some animals of the next species below man, and so on, down to the lowest grade of sentient beings. We must therefore either admit that a considerable portion of the human species possess bodies only, *and not souls*, or we must concede intellectual powers to the lower orders of being, many of whom discover faculties of mind far superior to those of idiots and infants, who constitute no inconsiderable part of mankind. It has been said that man is the only animal endued with reason, and that other animals possess instinct only. If it be *reason* in the *Indian* which induces him to cover his head with the shell of a pumpkin, and wade into the lake, near the floating gardens of Mexico, amid a flock of water-fowl, and by this stratagem seize his prey; is it not *reason also* in a *fox*, which induces him to conceal his head in a bunch of sea-weed, and by this artifice covertly approach a flock of ducks, and seize one by the leg and drag it ashore? Is it *reason* in a *boy* that induces him to sit upon one end of a board that is extended out of a window, while another boy goes out upon it and robs a swallow's nest, and *instinct* in a *rat* which induces him to place himself upon one end of a balance trap, while an assistant goes to the other end and takes off the bait, without springing it? Does not the beaver discover the *same reason* in constructing his house and building his dam, that the peasant does in building his log-hut and erecting a dam to flow his meadow? If it be *reason* in *one*, it must be *reason also* in the *other*. But admitting all this and much more to be the effect of mere instinct, it will by no means follow that the lower orders of being are destitute of mind; for *instinct* is no less an attribute of mind than *reason*. Every race of beings from man to the smallest insect, know how to make use of the necessary means to sustain life, and probably enjoy as much satisfaction in partaking of the simple food nature has provided for them, as the pampered epicure does in partaking of the

choicest viands, and without *his* consequential sufferings. Notwithstanding the lives of many animals and numerous insects are very short, according to the common method of reckoning time ; yet the life of an ephemeron-fly, if computed by the number of its new sensations, or ideas, may be as long, for aught we know, as that of man. Why is it unreasonable to conjecture that the rapid succession of ideas and sensations in small insects, bears some proportion to the minuteness and delicacy of their organization? And in as much as sensation implies both life and mind, are there not grounds to believe that mind and the living principle are inseparable in every being, and the existence of one necessarily implies that of the other? Man and other animals are compound beings, formed of material and mental substance. "All the properties of matter imply its being a dead, inactive thing, which moves only as it is moved, and acts only by being acted upon. But the mind is from its very nature, a living and active being. Every thing we know of it implies life and active energy." We have reason therefore to conclude that the principle of life belongs *exclusively* to mind ; yet its vivifying influence, like the influence of the will, may be extended to the material part of any being, so long as it is in a suitable condition to receive it. But when the body, which is the mere instrument of the soul, becomes unfit by age, or disorganization, to receive the influence of the will and of the living principle, the visible effects of both cease, though both principles or powers may continue to exist in the mind in full vigour. As mind and body constitute but one being, or rather the mind alone constitutes the sentient and intellectual being, it is no more probable that *one agent* is endued with *two* distinct, separate, and independent principles of life, that is a *mental* principle and a *corporeal* principle, than it is, that he is endued with a *mental will* and a *corporeal will*. The energetic influence of the mental principle, it is natural to conclude, is amply sufficient, when

extended to the body, to preserve it so long as the will of the Creator designed it should be ; and at death it will be laid aside, the mind having no farther use for a material body. If, therefore, the principle of life appertain to mind only, it follows as a necessary consequence that all animated beings, are endowed with mind, in a greater or less degree. Should we deny intellect to the lowest grade of animals, why not to the next grade above, and so on, till we arrive at man ? And why stop there, since he is probably as much below some other order of beings, as the meanest insect is below him, or as the meanest vegetable is below the meanest insect ? Inferior and superior, great and small, are relative terms ; and if we deny intellect to inferior beings, merely because they are inferior to the human species, an angel, for the same reason, may deny intellect to man. Because *we cannot*, with our *limited* optics and capacity, discover unequivocal marks of intellect in the lowest grade of animals, is *no stronger proof* that they do not possess it, than it is a proof that the planet Venus is destitute of inhabitants, because *we cannot see* them. Negative evidence proves nothing. But reasoning from analogy, we have the same grounds to believe that inferior animals possess intellect, as we had, previous to the discovery of the microscope, to believe that insects existed too small to be seen by the naked eye. As the original particles of matter may be indefinitely small, the least insect, hitherto discovered, may be as much larger than some animated beings who exist on this globe, as a mammoth is larger than a mite ; and there may be, and probably is, as great a disparity and diversity of intellect, in beings of different grades and species, as there is in the size and form of their bodies ; yet all may enjoy the boon of conscious existence.— We cannot, without arrogance, prescribe any limits either to the ascending or descending scale of sentient and intellectual beings. Nor can we, without equal presumption, fix any bounds to their future and pro-

gressive improvement. We ought not to infer, because we are unable to instruct and improve the lower grades of animals, that they are destitute of intellect, and incapable of improvement. As much depends on the instructor as on the pupil. Man can teach man, but the God of nature has provided other and better instructors for the lower class of beings, in such things as he saw their greatest good required. Can man, who is destitute of wings, teach a young bird to fly? Flying is as necessary to a bird as walking is to a man, and more difficult to learn. The intellect of a bird may be as much improved by learning the art of flying and balancing itself in the air, as that of a man is by learning navigation. Every animal has something to learn in infancy, before it can suitably provide for itself. To this end all animals are endued with a parental instinct, which induces them to instruct their infant progeny, and provide for their sustenance. Even some insects, who by the law of their nature die before their eggs are hatched, deposit with them, in the same cell, food for their future offspring, by tasting which they learn what is suitable for their nourishment. Though this is not presumed to be a state of the same moral discipline for the lower orders of being as it is for man; yet there can be no doubt it is a state of intellectual improvement for them, as well as him. Some animals, however, appear to possess moral virtues to a certain degree. Many of them protect and provide for their young, even at the risk of life. This is considered a *virtue in man*, why should it not be in *other animals*? It is as much the effect of instinct in the one, as in the other. Were it otherwise, *reason and instinct being both faculties of mind*, why should not an action *proceeding from the one*, be as *virtuous as the same or a similar action proceeding from the other*? The dog is remarkable for his fidelity, and other animals possess their *characteristic* virtues, or qualities. Moral improvement is unquestionably more essential to the happiness of man than that which is

purely intellectual; for he is endued, though perhaps not *exclusively*, with a moral sense, which upbraids him if he violate its dictates, or neglect its cultivation. It is different with most other animals. A nice moral sense would disqualify all kinds of fishes, beasts and birds of prey, and many other animals, for sustaining life by the only means nature has provided for that important purpose. The faculties of all animals are wisely adapted to their state and condition, and are developed at such period of their existence, and in such order and degree, as best comport with their happiness. If man were born in full possession of reason, he would be less happy in infancy than he now is; and if his moral sense were then developed, it would be worse than useless to him. Were this faculty at mature age, much more acute than it now is, when properly cultivated, it would be less conducive to his happiness; for by the constitution of his nature he is necessitated, in some situations at least, to destroy animal life as the principal means of supporting his own; and he cannot even walk on the ground, at particular seasons, without destroying many insects, whose lives may be as dear to them, as that of man is to him. This would be a constant source of infelicity to a mind endued with superhuman moral sensibility. The faculties of mind, developed in every species of being, in the present incipient state of existence, appear to be precisely such as the good of their nature requires. In future stages of existence, it is probable the good of every being may require the developement of additional, and very different faculties from those he now possesses. The analogy of nature authorizes this hope and expectation. Man at some future period of his existence may be endued with the faculties of an angel; but in his *present mode of life*, they would be less conducive to his happiness than the faculties of an orang-outang. The scale of intellect and its developement, we have reason to believe, correspond accurately to the mode of existence, which every creature, for wise and benevolent purposes, is destined to pass through. The all-wise

Creator is not *partial* that he should *limit* the existence and future improvements of *one race* of beings, and *extend* them to *another*. Man by nature has no stronger claim in equity to future existence and endless improvement than any other race of sentient beings. *All* are *equally* indebted to the benevolence of God for conscious existence. One order of beings may be capable of enjoying a greater *quantum* of happiness than another ; but *all* may be *equally satisfied* with their *state* and *condition*, and be *equally filled* with enjoyment and felicity ; for a small vessel may be *equally as full* and *equally as durable* as a *large* one, and if made of the same *elastic* materials, may continue to *expand* in the same proportion that a large one does. If it be the design of God *ultimately* to make his creatures *completely* happy, that object may as well be attained by the future improvement of the lower orders of being, as it can by that of the higher, especially if the present disparity of intellect be occasioned by the *diversity* of *material organization*, which in a *future state* may be *dispensed* with, and the lower *grades* of being *thereby elevated* to a more *exalted rank* in creation. Why then should he not be equally interested in extending their existence beyond the present life ? Is space limited, that there is no room for the future existence of any beings inferior to man ? Is the power or wisdom of God restricted that he cannot continue in existence the beings his goodness induced him to create ? Have the blessings of a short and precarious existence, bestowed on the lower orders of being, so exhausted the infinite goodness of God, that he has no wish to extend to them the blessings of life in a future and more perfect state ? Shall the beauty, order, and harmony existing among the various ranks and grades of being, be perfect here, and imperfect hereafter ? Shall by far the greater portion of animated beings, who inhabit this lower world, be struck out of existence, and an eternal blank be left in the realms above ? The *single* fact that many human beings are *losers* by their existence here, being doomed by events, they could not control, to endure more mis-

ery than they enjoy happiness, is, to my mind, the *strongest moral argument* for the future existence of man. Many of the lower orders of being are equally doomed to be *losers* by their existence in the *present state*. And shall infinite justice and mercy grant to man a future state of existence, in which he may be compensated for unmerited sufferings, and refuse it to other beings of inferior grade? The principles of justice and mercy never vary, and God will bestow them, without partiality, upon all his creatures of every grade. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God, being infinitely happy and glorious in his own eternal existence, could have no need of any created beings to add to his glory and felicity. The *only motive*, therefore, which can be *rationally assigned* for his creating any being whatever, is a *benevolent wish* and *design* to make it happy. No other motive could influence an all-wise, good, and perfectly happy being. *Will he not execute his designs and carry into effect his own wise and benevolent purposes?* His benevolent designs, it has been said, will be frustrated by the voluntary abuse of the powers and faculties he has bestowed on some of his creatures. That many moral agents, by abusing their liberty, will make themselves unhappy in a greater or less degree, so long as they are vicious and continue to violate the laws of God, impressed upon their minds, is readily granted; but that any being should, *on the whole*, be a *loser* by his existence and ultimately unhappy, is *totally inconsistent* with the goodness and perfections of Deity. The all-wise Creator, who formed the universe and its innumerable hosts, did not *act at random* in creating *any* being. He who bestows powers and faculties on all his creatures by weight and measure, must know the full extent of their operation, and every *possible* consequence resulting from them. To *deny* that God, before he created any particular being *could* and *must know*, if he *should* create it, *what use* it would make of its powers and faculties, is to *affirm*, in unequivocal language, that he is not omniscient, and does not possess so perfect a knowledge of

his own works, as a skilful mechanic does of a machine he has constructed. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?" Is it reasonable to suppose that God, if actuated by wisdom and goodness would create any being whatever, that he *knew* at the *time* of *creating it*, would *even* by its *own voluntary* act, be *finally miserable* and a *loser* by its *existence*? This would be *wholly inconsistent* with the *only motive*, which can *reasonably* be *assigned* for the *creation of any being*. Certainly no benevolent man, were it in his power, would be the *deliberate author* of such a deed. Shall we then suppose it *possible* that God, who possesses *infinite benevolence*, would *thus act*? We *cannot, without impeaching his goodness, entertain the thought.* It is unreasonable to suppose that a wise and benevolent being would awaken, or excite to action, any powers or faculties in his creatures, which he could not so far influence, direct, and control, as to make ultimately subservient to their happiness, the *great object* had in view in *forming* them. There is no rational being that would not be grateful to the Creator for *thus exercising* his beneficent power. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther," is the mandate of God, enjoined not only upon the sea, but upon all the works of his hands. Man and other moral agents are free within certain limits and to a given extent, beyond which their liberty ceases, or is controllable. I am aware of the difficulty of reconciling the free agency of any being with the foreknowledge of God. But we are not authorized to conclude, *merely* from our *inability* to reconcile them, that they are not *reconcilable* and perfectly consistent with each other. Though we cannot *directly* show their consistency, we may *indirectly* do it, by proving that foreknowledge cannot possibly have any influence or effect upon the future actions of any agent. Foreknowledge, apart from the exertion of any power in God to accomplish the event foreknown, is *wholly an inoperative principle*, and cannot, any more than knowledge, when unaccom-

panied by effort, produce any possible effect upon any being, other than the one possessing it. Not only so, but foreknowledge of a future event is *founded* upon the *previous certainty* of the event ; for in the order of nature the *certainty* of the event must necessarily *exist*, before it can with *certainty* be foreknown ; consequently foreknowledge has no influence or effect whatever on the action or event foreknown ; for that which is *subsequent*, cannot, as a cause, influence an event, the *certainty* of which *actually existed*, prior to the foreknowledge of it. It may, perhaps, be objected by some that the arguments deduced from the goodness and perfections of God, to prove the progressive improvement and ultimate happiness of *all* his creatures, prove too much ; and if they prove any thing, they prove that no evil exists, or ever did exist in the universe. That evils exist, is not denied ; but I shall attempt to prove that *none exist*, but *such as may be perfectly consistent* with the *infinite goodness and perfections* of God ; for the more we know of his works the more conspicuous do his wisdom and goodness appear. The earth, in consequence of the variety of its elements, soils, climates, and seasons, can support a much *greater* number of *diversified* beings, who may be capable hereafter of enjoying *complete happiness*, than it could if *all* were of *one kind* or *species*. Therefore the *disparity* of rank and condition among the numerous beings who inhabit this globe, is not a valid objection to the wisdom and goodness of God ; but an argument in support of them ; for the *increased* multiplication of being, is a *prerequisite* to an *increased communion* of happiness. But why, it has been asked, were fishes, beasts and birds of prey, and numerous insects *necessitated* by their *natures* to *destroy life* and *feed on misery* ? And why was the world peopled by so *short lived* races of beings, who *suffer* more or less in coming into the world, and in going out of it ? As a general answer to these questions, it has been said, that every species of being, collectively taken, enjoy more pleasure in this life than they endure pain. This an-

swer, if man and other sentient beings do not exist in a future state, is the *best* that *can* be given; but it does not, to my mind, *sufficiently* vindicate the goodness and perfections of God; for it is unquestionably true that many human beings and other innocent animals, are *losers* by their existence here. A tyrant may make the great mass of his subjects happy, and yet be guilty of great cruelty and injustice to individuals. The *true and only satisfactory* answer, that *can be given*, is, that *all sentient beings*, as already proved, will *exist hereafter*, and the increase and multiplication of them, produced by the operation of the system *actually adopted*, are infinitely greater than could have been effected by any other scheme, of which we have any conception; and consequently the happiness which *may ultimately result* from this seemingly cruel order of things, may be in the *same proportion greater* than could have been produced in any other way. "Increase and multiply," was the first command given to man, and has been punctually obeyed. The same injunction, with equal success, has been extended to the whole animal and vegetable worlds, which mutually promote the increase and multiplication of each other. Evil is *never* produced as an *end*; but is *incident* to the use of the *best means* of finally producing the *greatest good*. The laws of gravity sometimes occasion the evil of broken bones and premature death; but the existence of those laws can be no objection to divine goodness, inasmuch as the suspension of them for a single moment, would cause the earth and all its inhabitants to rush into instant ruin. In this case, and in all others of a similar nature, it is evident that the laws by which the natural and moral worlds are governed, were not designed to produce *evil as such*, but *general good*, and the *partial evil* occasioned by their operation, could not be prevented without occasioning a *much greater* evil. The pain every creature feels in approaching too near a fire, is *kindly* intended to *warn* him of his *danger*. The anguish and remorse, which, by the immutable laws of God, every moral agent, guilty of their viola-

tion, except it be repented of, is doomed, sooner or later, to feel, is with *equal benignity* designed to *reform* the offender, and thereby *qualify* him to enjoy the endless felicity he was formed to participate. Death, the king of terrors, grants a *safe passport* to the regions of immortality. And the brevity of life, which is common to man and all other animals, by making room for the rapid succession and multiplication of animated beings, instead of being an *objection* to divine wisdom and goodness, may be adduced as a *strong argument* in support of them. *If we consider this earth as only the seed-bed and nursery of immortal beings, initiated here into conscious existence, and prepared by pruning and suffering, for transplantation into another and better world, the present system of divine economy is admirably well adapted to so magnificent and benevolent a purpose.* Nothing can be better fitted to exercise and improve the mental faculties of earthly beings than the constant efforts they are induced to make to avoid impending evil, and to secure and increase the good they enjoy. Every created being, when it first comes out of the hands of its maker, is as perfect as he designed it should be at that period of its existence ; but no creature is made perfect, even of its kind, without being taught by experience what evils are to be avoided, and what good its nature requires. Man, in infancy, though perfectly innocent, must, before he can acquire the perfections of an adult, have his powers and faculties developed, disciplined, and improved by experience, which in the result, will most effectually teach him the road to happiness. The *creation* of any being cannot *properly* be considered as *finished* till it is made *perfect in its nature*, by passing through such changes and vicissitudes, as were designed by the wise and beneficent Creator to produce that effect. The *first rudiments* of being only, are *immediately* formed by God, who then leaves it to time and circumstances, and the operation of wise and salutary laws to *complete* the work in the *best* and most *effectual* manner. To purify, enlighten, and perfect the minds of created beings, it seems necessary, in

the first stages of their existence, that they should pass the ordeal of suffering, which, pursuant to the wise and liberal constitution of Heaven, will impart to their future and unceasing enjoyments, such ADDITIONAL ZEST, as will more than compensate them for all temporary evils they may have endured. Where then is absolute evil? By admitting the future and ultimately happy existence of all sentient beings, it is banished, at once, from the universe: And none will be found to exist, except what is relative to a wise and benevolent end, and will in the result, produce a balance of happiness to every created being, which will infinitely outweigh all the misery, of which it was the incidental cause. The arguments for divine wisdom and goodness, drawn from reason, experience, and a philosophical view of the works of creation, numerous and convincing as they are, will receive additional weight, if it can be made to appear probable, that the benevolent work of creation, commenced from eternity, now goes on, and will never cease. Some objections may be urged against this hypothesis. One is, that the creature would be coeval with the Creator, and therefore eternal. This objection has been anticipated and obviated in the former part of the disquisition, where it was clearly proved, to my apprehension at least, that the act of creation, or rather formation, must of necessity be progressive, and not instantaneous; and therefore the first created being must be *less than eternal* in its *formed existence*, by the *whole time occupied* in its *formation*. Another objection is, that eternal matter, though dispersed, here and there, through unbounded space, contains immense vacuities, and would in time, by the continued act of creation, be worked up and totally exhausted. In answer to this objection it is sufficient to observe that worlds and material systems, if necessary, may be formed anew, out of the same materials of which they were first composed, and that mental substance, may be infinite and inexhaustible; and that no being, in its *most perfect state* of existence, will probably have any use for a body, formed of *common matter*. St. Paul says, "there is a natural body, and there

is a spiritual body. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;—that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;” that is, the germ of the spiritual body will not germinate and be fully developed, till after the dissolution of the material body. He also says “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Material bodies, therefore, must be worse than useless in a future state of existence.—Consequently the same materials which constitute the earthly body of one being, may afterwards be successively used in the formation of the material part of an indefinite number of sentient beings. It may also be objected, that infinite power can create every possible being in a moment. It has already been proved that the work of creation must necessarily be progressive; if so, it is obvious that infinite power, unrestricted by other attributes of Deity, can create more in a day than in a shorter space of time. And if creation were not a progressive work, we are not authorised to affirm, that even infinite power can effect as much in a day, or in an age, as it can in eternal ages. If by the greatest possible effort of infinite power, exerted during one day, an indefinite portion of unbounded space be filled with created beings, would not an *equal effort* during *another day*, *double* the number? The act of creation being progressive, infinite power may be *always filling*, but will *never fill* unbounded space with created beings. Having obviated the only objections that occur to my mind against the hypothesis of *continual creation*, I may now be permitted to ask, whether it is reasonable to suppose that a being of infinite power, wisdom and goodness had been *wholly inactive* for an *eternity past*, and had not formed an individual being to participate his bounty? As the work of creation could have been achieved with infinite ease, what reason can be assigned, worthy the benevolence of God, for his permitting *past eternity* to elapse, without exerting his beneficent power in creating living monuments of his wisdom and goodness? Benevolence is *essentially an active principle*, and its activity is always propor-